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JAEGER SUBMITS ELECTION REFORM PLAN TO FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

Bismarck, ND – Calling it an evolving road map that will undoubtedly improve and energize the election process in North Dakota for years to come, Secretary of State Al Jaeger submitted North Dakota's state plan for implementing federal election reform to the Federal Election Commission today.

Jaeger's submission marks the end of an intense planning effort that began in April, following a successful legislation session that paved the way for implementing the new federal requirements contained in the Help America Vote Act of 2002, more commonly known as HAVA.

"While it has been a challenging process, under very confined timelines, the state planning effort has also been rewarding and worthwhile, marked by positive and meaningful discussions about ways to improve North Dakota's election process," said Jaeger. "With the input of diverse interests represented on our HAVA planning committees, I truly believe this plan represents the thoughts and opinions of a wide variety of North Dakota voters and will serve the state well as we implement the changes required by HAVA over the course of the next several years."

Jaeger credits the productive and meaningful planning process to the many contributors and participants in the planning process.

"While the bulk of North Dakota's effort can be credited to a small steering committee and the larger state planning committee composed of county officials, representation from my office, the North Dakota Association of Counties, and diverse voter interest groups, the comments and feedback from the public, especially those gathered during the public hearing, proved to be invaluable as well," said Jaeger. "It was a valuable and inclusive process and we gained a great deal of information from it."

As a result of comments and other information gathered during the required 30-day public comment period, a few significant changes were made to the plan. The plan was made technology neutral by removing all specific references to optical scan and touch-screen direct recording electronic (DRE) voting technology in order to provide the state maximum flexibility in deploying the most current and up-to-date voting systems. The plan's timelines were also stretched-out to coincide directly with the federal act's January 1, 2006, deadline in order to provide the state as much time as possible to comfortably implement and comply with the new requirements.

"I was glad to see that the state planning committee made changes to the plan that give us maximum flexibility and take into account the reality that voting technology will likely evolve during the next two years," said Jaeger. "While it is very likely that we will be looking to optical scan and touch-screen technology to meet the requirements of HAVA, we are finding that these technologies are still being enhanced and improved. New technologies are also becoming

available that we may want to consider and, quite frankly, may better meet the needs of our state.”

In addition to these changes to the plan, a simple process was inserted to allow a county to appeal the target number of precincts set for that county. The target number of precincts, devised to reduce the number of voting precincts statewide, will be determined by a formula established by a group of county election officials. The Secretary of State will consider appeals directly from counties.

According to Jaeger, the state’s plan, which was unanimously approved by the State HAVA Planning Committee at their final July 31 meeting, now makes it’s way to the Federal Election Commission’s Office of Election Administration. There, the state’s plan will be reviewed and eventually published in the Federal Register for 45 days. Following its publication in the Federal Register, the state will be eligible to apply for an additional \$4.15 million for defraying expenses associated with the new federal requirements. Jaeger’s office has already received \$5 million in federal funds to conduct the planning phase and begin implementing HAVA. Jaeger, along with other Secretaries of State and chief election officials from across the nation, continue to press Congress and the President for additional HAVA funding; citing that the current appropriation of \$1.5 billion is not enough to cover the expenses associated with HAVA’s many requirements.

A copy of the North Dakota’s finalized plan submitted by Jaeger may be obtained from the Secretary of State’s office or from the state’s web site dedicated to HAVA at www.discovernd.com/hava, where additional facts and information about HAVA may also be found.

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Please find attached a copy of the members of the State HAVA Steering and Planning Committees who were responsible for developing North Dakota’s plan.